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tration of the cultural attitude to sex when he said that he had twice slept with a girl at Parfok, at her request, when he accompanied his father there to help perform religious ceremonies; he enjoyed the experience and would willingly repeat it; but he does not want to marry the girl because he does not like her.

It is permissible for a man who feels himself unable to cope with his field-work, either on account of physical weakness or because he has other work which takes him a great deal from the neighbourhood, to invite an unmarried younger brother to live with him and to share his fields and wife. The co-husband is co-opted without any sort of ceremony, but thereafter he is no longer free in the choice of a wife of his own, if he desires one; he must make the request for a wife of the same *ptso* as the shared wife, exactly as if he was taking a second wife in the normal course of events. The co-husbands sleep with their common wife on alternate nights, but all the children are presumed to be begotten by the first husband, and he alone has to observe the pre-natal precautions; an exception is only made to this rule if the first husband's prolonged absence makes his paternity a physiological impossibility.

In the recent past there have only been two cases of such polyandry in Lingthem; one is that of Chala Mandal, described above, who first shared and then gave his first two wives to a 'younger brother'; the second is that of the second Dorjé Lapoon, who shared his wife with his real elder brother; this brother was a lama attached to another village who was almost always away, so that the second Dorjé Lapoon had almost the exclusive use of his shared wife. It is not allowable for two unrelated men to share a wife, but two who call themselves 'brothers' may do so; unless the two men are closely related this is considered undesirable, as it is liable to lead to quarrelling. There are some obvious advantages for a first husband in co-opting a second husband; it is an easy way to get rid of a wife of whom you are tired; it gives an extra adult worker and a care-taker for your property and wife when you have to be absent. The position of second co-husband on the other hand seems to offer few attractions except to the poor and unambitious, under-sexed man, and it is understandable that there are very few examples of such polyandry. In the event of polyandry or polygyny the incest prohibition against sleeping with your husband's younger brother, or your wife's elder sister, are obviously suspended.

coming when they were invited, and begging them now to go away. On those occasions when singing is called for it is nearly always the Mun who sing, and they possess a considerable repertoire of more or less sacred songs. All these songs are in the minor key, more or less rhythmic, with a great stressing of the last syllable of each line, which is prolonged for several notes, usually in a descending scale. The tunes are not set, and allow of easy improvisation. Songs are often sung at feasts, and always at marriages; they are always unaccompanied. The bamboo flutes which some young men make and play are used entirely as a solitary diversion.

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The services of the Mun are continuously necessary in the life of every Lepcha. They must always be present at birth, at marriage they are the only essential priests, and at the death of laymen their rôle is of more emotional importance than the lamas. Throughout life they are necessary for cleansing from supernatural danger, for blessing and solemnising different undertakings, and, above all, for expelling devils.

Ceremonial cleansing is performed by *pék*-ing, by the Mun waving certain objects over the actual or potential sufferer. The objects waved differ with the circumstances; thus in the fifth month of pregnancy both parents are *pék* with a bunch of elephant grass to insure an easy delivery: if labour is difficult the mother in childbirth is *pék* with a live chicken, and, if she or her husband have neglected a pre-natal precaution, with the object which has been wrongly handled or finished. Similarly after an abortion or still-born child has been thrown into the river, a Mun will *pék* the carriers with a bunch of stinging and thorny plants and the parents will be *pék* with a live animal which will later be sacrificed, in order to prevent the devil which has caused one death causing more. *Pék*-ing is employed in a number of circumstances, sometimes alone, and sometimes as part of an exorcism. It is the nearest approach in Lepcha life to ritual cleansing.

Blessings are invoked and pacts solemnised by the ritual of *sakyoi faat*, the pouring or drinking of strained *chi* from a cup on the sides of which dabs of butter have been placed. It is not absolutely essential that Mun perform this ritual; any old and experienced man who has received *loong* may do so. *Sakyou faat* cannot be offered by women, except by women Mun inside their own homes, by lamas, or by people in mourning. The ceremony is performed to solemnise a marriage, to set up the ~~ingaaay~~ relation, to mark the formal swearing of an oath or before starting any unusual undertaking.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

According to Lepcha theory a child's life starts at the moment of conception. When the two secretions mingle[1] the soul arrives from heaven or the place of the gods (the first being the lamaist, the second the Mun, repository of unborn people); the father's semen provides the bones and brain, the mother's vaginal secretions the flesh and blood. The first portion of the foetus to be formed is the eyes, which are completed at the end of the first month; then from round the eyes the head develops and then the rest of the body downwards. The foetus is completely human with all its organs, and even its hair, at the end of the fifth month.

Within the womb is something resembling a nipple through which the child draws nourishment; this nourishment is something like butter, and is the transmuted food of the mother, just as milk is after birth. Consequently the mother is not permanently depleted by child-bearing; none of her body has gone to feed the child.

Conception is shown by the cessation of the menses, which were instituted for that purpose. The child does not feed on the menstrual blood; menstruation is exclusively a calendar.

At the fifth month when the baby is considered fully formed the expectant parents must start observing the numerous pre-natal precautions which have to be followed if the child is not to be born malformed, or if the mother is not to have a difficult delivery. The entering into this period of pre-natal precautions is established by a Mun *pék*-ing both parents with a bunch of elephant grass in one hand and a live fowl in the other. Both parents are equally capable of influencing the child within the womb, and in point of fact the greater number of the precautions to be observed are concerned with work which is liable to fall to a man rather than a woman. Copulation after conception has no influence on the foetus, except incestuously, which would produce a miscarriage, and may

[1] The Lepchas consider semen and the vaginal secretions to be parallel substances; they are called penis-water and vagina-water.

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843 [833] be continued right up to birth; in the last weeks it is generally performed *a retro* lying on the side.

It would be tedious to give a complete list of the pre-natal precautions to be observed, but the following are some typical examples. If either of the parents are engaged in making a fence he or she must do the whole work by himself; otherwise the baby cannot be born properly. The father must not take any fish out of a trap in the river or the child will be born with its nose stopped up. Neither parent must lock up anything except their own box or the child will not be able to be born until what is closed is opened; even the house door must not be fastened. Neither parent may eat animals which have met their death by accident or by being killed by a wild beast; the father must never look at a recently killed animal; he can kill animals but must run away at once. The father must not touch the iron or rope of a horse's bridle; should he do so the mother and child are liable to die, but this can be prevented if a bridle is kept in the house which can be *pék* over the woman during delivery. If either parent should be weaving a mat or cloth he or she must never quite finish it but must leave a little bit over. The mother must not eat any joined fruit such as a double banana or the child's toes will be webbed. Neither parent must stick poles into the ground or tie knots or drive in nails or put small stones into the cracks between bigger stones when building a wall; all of these prevent proper delivery. Expectant parents must not look at a solar or lunar eclipse or the child will be born dead; in the case of a solar eclipse both parents must stop in the house all day. If a child has recently died the paths it used to walk in and its house must be avoided; and as a general precaution it is better to avoid the paths and houses of all recently dead people. Expectant parents must not watch a dog being born; if they do so the child will have one eye smaller than the other. If expectant parents move a sacred image the child will be born dumb. Should either parent look at or kill a field-mouse or should they eat rice which has stuck to the bottom of the cooking-pot the placenta will not descend. There are a very great number of prohibitions similar to those listed above; the second half of pregnancy is a period of constant watchfulness for both parents.

There is a disease called *tamdit* which afflicts expectant parents; one loses all appetite while the other eats voraciously. This does not affect all people and may strike either sex.

The sex of a child is fixed after five months; and one can tell

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whether the infant is a boy or a girl by the fact that a boy is always higher in the womb. The sex can also be diagnosed by a Mun at about eight months when the Mun *péks* the body of an expectant mother.

The sex of a child is, however, not really fixed; its sex can be changed for that of another child in the womb either with the consent of the parents or surreptitiously. This is done very simply by a pair of expectant fathers or mothers exchanging any article. Tafoor's two middle daughters should really have been boys; when his wife was carrying the eldest daughter who was then a son, a lama from some way away asked him to change; Tafoor refused, whereupon the lama surreptitiously exchanged tassels on his rosary. The result was that a daughter was born, but with a boy's character which will continue until she has slept with a man; she climbs trees, kills birds, makes bows and arrows and has a large frame more like a boy than a girl; she is indeed considerably taller than her brother Chimpet, who is two years older. The second boy-in-the-womb Tafoor exchanged voluntarily with his younger brother Chudo, who had already had one daughter and whose wife was pregnant with another daughter; the exchange was successful for both parties. This exchange, however, cannot be performed if the two pregnant mothers are blood relations. This belief, which is universally held, is, I think, another excellent illustration of the Lepcha attitude towards the correlation of sex and temperament; sex is a question entirely of the primary sexual characteristics and nothing more.

Quickening of the foetus is merely diagnosed as a sign of life; but if a child moves a great deal inside the womb the forecast is that when it is grown up he or she will be excessively lascivious.

Miscarrying is caused by a devil Sor *moong* and is an hereditary sex-linked disability (as indeed is difficult delivery). As soon as a woman has miscarried she, unless she is seriously ill, and at all events her husband, must carry the foetus down to the river accompanied by a Mun who will there *pék* the couple with a bunch of elephant grass to which coloured threads, two rings, a rupee and a turquoise have been attached. On returning home an animal must be sacrificed and the Mun will *pék* the couple again. The wife is considered 'unclean' after a miscarriage and must be well washed and fed on chicken soup and butter. Ordinarily after the sixth month of pregnancy the mother will be *pék* by a Mun to avoid miscarriage as a routine precaution. If a woman who has mis-

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843 carried is not *pék* other miscarriages will follow. A miscarriage is merely a dead child and has no sort of moral significance. It is possible that if a woman were pregnant by a bastard she would try to hide the miscarriage; this is *nam-toak* and she and her village will be punished with storms and hail which will destroy the crops.

[847] Except in the theoretical case of a girl being delivered of a bastard in the forest and there killing it, infanticide is not permitted for any reason whatsoever; neither monsters nor deformed infants nor even incestuously begotten children will be killed.

844 To procure easy delivery a Mun will offer two chickens to Sor *moong* in the seventh or eighth month of pregnancy. Easy or difficult labour is considered to be a hereditary quality; a woman who after easy deliveries suddenly has a difficult one is considered either to have helped a woman in child-birth who had difficult labour, or to have eaten some of the food of such a woman. If labour is difficult a Mun and lama will be called in to find out the cause of this, which is almost certain to be the breaking of some pre-natal taboo, probably by the father. If this is discovered by divination the appropriate steps will be taken to remove the *tamtoom* by the undoing or unlocking that which had been incorrectly completed

[845] or locked. It may be noted that it is impossible to procure an abortion or still-birth by the intentional breaking of pre-natal precautions; any such act which can kill the child will also kill the mother.

About a month before delivery is expected some specially strong *chi* is prepared and put aside; this must on no account be touched by anybody until the third day after delivery, when it is served at the birth feast; and, for a month after, it is given as a specially strengthening food to the newly delivered mother. Apart from this no special preparations are made for birth, which takes place in the husband's house; all the members of the household are present at the birth, but no strangers unless a Mun or lama has to be called in to give his services to help a difficult delivery. The mother is delivered in the kitchen; a rope is suspended from the ceiling to which she clings, squatting; she may be helped by the father or parents-in-law or anybody who knows how, who will squat behind and press on the woman's breasts and belly. As soon as the baby has appeared the cord is cut and the part attached to the baby tied up; then the baby is washed in luke warm water, wrapped in a cloth, and given the breast. Anybody who knows how can cut the navel-cord—the mother or father or anybody else who has

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consideration instead of being looked upon as an outcast, and a source of defilement to others.

It is usual for everybody living in a house where a birth has recently taken place to wash themselves and their clothes, first in hot water inside the house, and afterwards in the nearest stream. The mother generally continues to wash every three days for the first month following the child's birth, and the baby itself is said to be washed each night and morning for a month. This, however, I think is merely a counsel of perfection and not often observed. I should add that there is amongst the Lepchas no idea of ceremonial uncleanliness, either at this or at any other time; nor have they the common obsession with defecation, which leads Indians to look upon the left hand (with which the body is always cleaned) as itself an unclean thing.

During the third-day celebrations the mother will usually wear new or at least freshly-washed clothes. The baby itself will be wrapped in a cloth, the colour of which should be in accordance with its birth-signs. Thus, if it has been ascertained that the child will become a Lama, for instance, it will be wrapped in a yellow cloth; if a hunter, then in red; if a woman of loose morals, lilac; and so on.

As soon as a woman becomes pregnant both she and her husband must take certain precautions, the neglect of which is thought to cause, amongst other things, difficult delivery. During the fifth month of pregnancy it is usual to call in a Mun, who will wave elephant grass over the mother and thus ensure an easy birth.

During the whole time of pregnancy and up to the third day after the birth of the child both the father and mother, should they be making garden fences, must work unassisted. Failure to observe this precaution will cause a difficult delivery.

The father must not take fish out of a trap, or the child will be born with its nose stopped up. Nor must he lock anything up, with the exception of his own private box, or the child will refuse to descend from the womb until such

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time as he unlocks it again. This applies even to his own 843
house-door, which he may close but not fasten. He must not tie up any article of clothing in such a way that it forms a bag; and if the string by which his ordinary bag is suspended from his shoulder happens to break he must on no account pick it up; he may, however, recover any grain that spills out. He must not eat animals which have met their death by accident, or which have been killed by some beast of prey; nor should he look upon recently killed animals of any kind. There is no objection to his killing animals; but if he does so he must run away at once and let others deal with the carcass. He must not eat birds caught in a trap; nor touch the iron or rope of a horse's bridle (this is somewhat unexpected in a completely horseless community), or both the mother and child will certainly die. Should he by any chance inadvertently touch a bridle during the period of his wife's pregnancy the resulting evil may be averted by keeping a bridle in the house and having it waved over his wife at the actual time of delivery.

If he is making a bamboo mat, for instance, he must be careful not to finish it off completely; he should always leave a little piece at the end undone, and this applies to any other similar kind of work. There is no objection to either of the parents eating fruit which grows on trees or bushes; but the woman must be careful not to eat a double banana or her [826]
child will be born with webbed toes. Similarly, should she eat a double head of millet it would cause the child to be born with extra fingers.

A man must also take care not to blow up a bladder, such as is used for storing grain, during the pregnancy period. If he happened to do this in the fifth month, for instance, it [753]
would mean that the baby would die when it was five months old: if in the seventh month, then when it reached the age of seven months, and so on, until the actual day of birth. The actual death would be caused by a swollen stomach, a punishment sent by Gongbo Mung, from which the child would not recover. This particular precaution

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843 may not be neglected in order to bring about an abortion, or the early death of the child, since this would also cause the death of the mother. Incidentally, it may be noted that if a baby is seen at any time to be suffering from swollen
[755] stomach (wind?) it is usual to wave a bladder over it which is filled with various kinds of grain and butter.

[824] Here are some more pre-natal precautions. Wild potatoes should not be eaten if found lodged between two stones. Poles should not be stuck into the ground; and it is inadvisable to tie anything into a knot, or drive in nails. It would be well also to avoid putting the small stones in between the large ones to fill up the cracks in building a wall. Care should be taken not to look upon a dying or dead snake, as this would certainly bring misfortune of one sort of another.
[821] One should not look at a solar or lunar eclipse or the child will certainly be stillborn; and in the case of a solar eclipse it would be better to remain indoors all day. If some child has recently died, both its house and the paths it was accustomed to use should be avoided; and it is indeed better to avoid the house of any recently deceased person. No
[845] paint or other colouring matter should be put on the body during the months of pregnancy or the stains will be reproduced on the body of the child. If it is necessary, for any reason, to sew food up in a bag, care should be taken that it is not again taken out from the sewn end, or this will result in breech presentation. If it is necessary to open such a bag the unsewn bottom end should be slit open and the sewn top left intact.

843 There was one small girl in Lingtem who squinted. This
826 was the result, so everyone said, of her father squinting with one eye, perhaps to aim or to see if a roof was straight, during her mother's pregnancy; and nearly every physical defect of this sort, birth-marks, and such-like, is attributed to the neglect of some pre-natal precaution. All these precautions—and there are doubtless many more of which I have no knowledge—must be observed by both parents from the fifth month of pregnancy until three days after the

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child is born; and during this period it is thought that the father's actions can affect the fœtus equally with those of the mother. It is believed that a newly-born child is not in full possession of its soul until three days after its birth, and for this reason the precautions are observed until this day.

During the time of birth no man is present in the room, and the subject is naturally an impossible one for a male to investigate. Karma said that when he was a boy he was very anxious to see how babies were born, and one day he went unnoticed to a house in order to witness this event. It had only a floor of bamboo slats, so that by standing underneath and looking up he was able to see everything:

"The woman was holding on to a rope, which was suspended from the roof, and was herself being held from behind by another woman. I first saw a large round object appear, which was apparently the baby's head. Every time the mother grunted a little more appeared; but when she ceased to grunt the whole object appeared to contract and disappear. There was complete silence for a bit and then the object seemed to shoot out of the woman's body with great rapidity. I saw that it was the baby.

"I noticed that the woman's vulva was very large and round; but I was not frightened, nor did I feel the least shame. I think I really did not think about the matter at all. I suppose I must have been about eight or nine years of age at the time this happened. I only went because I was very interested to see how a baby was born, and because I wanted to see what a woman's vulva was like. I could not now watch this sort of thing, as it would have too exciting an effect on me."

If the afterbirth does not descend it is usual to sever the child's umbilical cord and tie it to one of the mother's toes. At the same time any Mun who has previously attended her should now come and again wave elephant grass over her. Failure to get rid of the afterbirth is due to the mother having stepped across a ring of straw during pregnancy, an action which is thought to cause the vaginal passage to

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844 descend with the afterbirth, thus causing the death of the mother. The following actions during pregnancy are also
[843] likely to have the same effect: eating carrion; eating rice scraped from the very bottom of the pot, and accordingly slightly burnt.

The umbilical cord is generally cut with a small knife by some woman helper; but if necessary the mother may do it herself. The slough of the cord is carefully kept and when it drops off is tied to the child's necklace. It is usually thrown away when the child reaches the age of four or five; but if lost or thrown away before this period it is said that the baby will crawl to the fire-place and scratch amongst the ashes searching for it. The actual cord, together with the afterbirth, is put into a small bamboo container, covered with a cloth, and taken to the forest by the father, where it is hung up on a tree out of reach of insects and animals. Some people say that the container is either buried in the
[753] ground or thrown into a stream; but there seems to be an idea that if the thing is buried by chance in wet ground, for instance, it means that the child will have weak and running eyes in later years; if buried in cultivation it would spoil the crops; and if the afterbirth should, by chance, be eaten by insects or wild animals it might later suffer from skin eruptions. For these reasons the container is usually hung up in a tree; but, as usual, it does not really matter.
[184] Kalimpong Lepchas think that if the afterbirth is taken too far away from the house there is a danger that a long time will elapse before another child is born; but this idea appears not to be known in Jongu.

845 A stillborn child is taken straight away and thrown into the nearest river. On the way back a Mun will meet the parents some little distance outside their house and will wave such things as thorny plants over them: but there is otherwise no form of ceremony; nor need the pre-natal precautions be continued up to the third day, when it is found that the child is already dead. When a child is stillborn, or dies very shortly after birth, a large stone is heated and the child's

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mother milked on to it. When this is done the milk on the 845
stone at once dries up with a frizzling noise: this is an
example of what Frazer calls "sympathetic magic," and is
done in the hope of stopping lactation.

There appears to be no cessation of sexual intercourse up 843
to the time a child is born, but a man does not sleep with 833
his wife for the seven days following birth. We shall see, [837]
later on, that certain men other than the husband also have
the right to sleep with a woman, but it is thought that the
husband alone should have relations with his wife once it
is known that she is pregnant. Sexual relations in general
will be discussed later, but this seems a suitable place in
which to mention the special ritual sexual intercourse, called
Tung Bong-Zum (the meaning of which words I have been
unable to discover), which takes place between the husband
and wife on the seventh night after the birth of a child.

It is believed that many women suffer from severe pains 846
in the stomach during the first few days following their 833
delivery; and especially is this the case when there has been
no hæmorrhage. The condition is known as *Saklong*, a word
which denotes that a woman has had no flow of blood
following the descent of the afterbirth. To prevent this
condition the woman is given hot soup, fish boiled in butter,
and other hot food immediately she begins to feel the labour
pains; and if it cannot be treated at once it is thought that
the woman will die. But of much more importance in the
cure is the *Tung Bong Zum*, as it is thought that the man's
semen will cause the pain to subside. On this occasion, the
man enters the woman from behind and is particularly
enjoined not to be violent. It is said that many men do not
care to copulate in this fashion; but on such occasions the
woman will not permit them to adopt the normal position.
Once the *Tung Bong Zum* has been performed normal sexual
relations may be resumed; but some women do not allow
their husbands to have regular relations with them for
another twenty days or so, or until such time as they have
thoroughly recovered their strength. Very occasionally the

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832 which I have been unable to identify, is said to have a somewhat stimulating effect, and chameleon flesh serves the same purpose. These creatures normally live in trees, but are in the habit of drinking out of wells. If a man drinks water into which they have urinated he is liable to suffer from priapism, and a woman may become a nymphomaniac; but if the actual flesh of the animal is eaten this has a much stronger effect. The flesh of the male animal creates desire; that of the female takes it away. Chameleons are not found in Jongu, but Tafoor says he has seen them exposed for sale in Gangtok. He first heard about their use from old people who had been down to the plains and fought in the Bhutan war: they are not much used in Jongu.

834 It is usual for a man to have no sexual intercourse with his wife during the menstrual period; not, however, for reasons of hygiene, but because it is thought that he may become senseless for a week or so. It is said, though, that women [842] become very amorous at this time, as a result of which intercourse indulged in immediately after the cessation of the menses usually results in conception. This idea is also very common among the Nepalese, who, however, unlike the Lepchas, believe that conception cannot take place at any other time.

● 843 It is not considered that child-bearing has any particular effect upon a woman: it does not age her in any way, nor does it impair her strength or looks. On the other hand it is not thought harmful if a woman never has a child. During the months of pregnancy the father is liable to get a little thin, and both parents may suffer from a state known as *thum doat*, which appears to be a state of loss of appetite. Both these states, however, are merely due to anxiety and not to any supernatural or other influence.

According to Lepcha ideas the first part of the fœtus to be formed is the head: this takes about one month, and is followed by the remaining parts downward, the feet appearing last of all. The baby is thought to be completely formed after five months, when it also acquires a separate soul of its

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own. The child gets its bone from the father's semen, and its flesh from the mother's vaginal secretions. The food eaten by the mother causes the fœtus to grow; but once the baby is completely formed inside the womb it feeds on its mother's menstrual blood, which explains why the menses cease during pregnancy. 843

It is generally believed that a girl has her first menses about one month after she copulates for the first time, even though she be only nine or ten years old. Nothing is done or said at such a time; nor on any later occasion is any kind of special clothing or bandage worn. This is the origin of menstruation: 881

In olden times menstruation was confined to men, who used to bleed from the knees. In view of their normal occupations, working in the fields, hunting, and so on, this was very inconvenient, since the blood dripped all over the place. Nazong Nyu noticed this and wondered what he could do to remedy it. 773 539 841

Now in those days the female genitalia were situated in the middle of the forehead. Nazong thought this did not look very nice and decided to change the position. He summoned some bulbuls and told them to peck out the women's parts and replant them in their chins. This they did; but after a time Nazong still did not think the general effect was very pleasing. He summoned the birds again and told them to move the parts to the women's chests; but still he was not satisfied. Finally he had them moved to the place where they now are; and seeing that they were suitably hidden beneath the women's clothing he decided that it would be more convenient if women menstruated instead of men. As a result of this arrangement the women started to bleed periodically from that very day, and the bulbul still has a blood-red spot on its tail: this it acquired when it was carrying out Nazong Nyu's orders.

One day when I was talking to Karma we were all laughing rather loudly at some remark when there was a 821 831